

THE SLAVERY QUESTION.

SPEECH :

OF

HON. L. Q. C. LAMAR, OF MISS.,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 21, 1860.

The House being in the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the President's Annual Message—

Mr. LAMAR said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I obtained the floor several days ago for the purpose of replying to some arguments advanced in a very ingenious and well-considered speech from the gentleman from Connecticut, [Mr. FERRY.] I desire to begin my remarks to-day by a quotation from the philosopher and poet, Coleridge, which I will thank the Clerk to read for me.

The Clerk read, as follows:

"An American commander, who had deserved and received the highest honors which his grateful country, through her assembled representatives, could bestow upon him, once said to me, with a sigh, 'In an evil hour for my country did the French and Spaniards abandon Louisiana to the United States. We were not sufficiently a country before; and should we ever be mad enough to drive the English from Canada and her other North American Provinces, we shall soon cease to be a country at all. Without local attachment, without national honor, we shall resemble a swarm of insects that settle on the fruits of the earth to corrupt and consume them, rather than men who love and cleave to the land of their forefathers. After a shapeless anarchy, and a series of civil wars, we shall at last be formed into many countries, unless the vices engendered in the process should demand further punishment, and we should previously fall beneath the despotism of some military adventurer, like a lion, consumed by an inward disease, prostrate and helpless beneath the beak and talons of a vulture, or yet meaner bird of prey.'"

The distinguished commander there referred to, Mr. Chairman, was Decatur. No one can read that declaration without feeling some disposition to inquire whether we are about to realize its fulfillment. The animosities that exist between the two sections of the Confederacy, the discord that reigned for seven long weeks on this floor, are fearful tokens of a deep-seated disorder in our political system.

My object to-day is to inquire how far my constituents and the people with whom they are associated are responsible for the existing condition of things. Mississippi, sir, has grown up under this Federal Union. There is not, within her limits, a proprietor who does not hold his home under a grant from the Federal Government. Her noble university, and her common schools, are all established by donations from the public domain, which she has received, in common with all the new States. It is true, that in the special and appreciable advantages of Federal legislation—such as discriminations in favor of industrial pursuits, and commercial enterprise, and the returns of taxation, in the form of Government expenditures—she receives far less than an average share. She has no ships to participate in the monopoly granted to American vessels of the coasting trade, and the benefit of tonnage duties in their favor in the foreign trade. Her population have no fishing or other bounties from the national Treasury; and the tariff on imports does not operate to protect the productions of her industry. She has no army of contractors or Federal officers; nor are there any public buildings of imperial magnificence constructed by the Government within her limits. But she is prosperous; and the heart of her people beats truer to the Union than to their own tranquillity. Nor will she be driven from her devotion, except by causes which she has not created, and by consequences for which she is not responsible. Mississippi has never declared herself in favor of disunion, *per se*. She will not make that declaration until she becomes convinced that her sister States north are deliberately determined to endanger her internal and social institutions, or to impair her dignity and equality as a confederate State.

Now, sir, I should not be candid if I did not say that there are many, perhaps a majority, in my State who do not speak with the same reserve and caution as I am doing on this occasion. The obvious and unmistakable tokens of design in the long-continued and crafty agitation of this slavery question, have produced alienation and distrust. It is a unanimous sentiment in the South that the existence of this Republican organization is a standing menace to her peace and security; and a standing insult to her character. More especially have the recent events in Virginia, the discordant proceedings of this House, and the angry discussion on the Helper book, created a tone and tendency in the public feeling which must tell unhappily on the political transactions of our country for a long series of years.

I was pained, during that discussion, to hear the distinguished gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CORWIS] ask, in a tone of levity which evinced how lightly he esteemed the temper of our people: "Why, gentlemen, can a small book like the Helper Compend endanger your proud institutions?" Sir, a million such books could not, for an instant, affect the

South, but for the conviction that it represents and embodies the sentiments of a large mass of the northern people. You, gentlemen, who have disclaimed and repudiated its *practical recommendations*, do not deny, I believe you all admit, that the *fundamental doctrine* of the book—that slavery is a great moral, social, and political wrong, to be opposed by the Government everywhere and under all circumstances, by all constitutional means; its extension to be prohibited, and the powers of this Government to be applied to confine it with a view to its extinction—is the predominant opinion of a large mass of the northern people; that it infects their literature, pervades their jurisprudence, is inculcated in their theology, controls their local legislation, and constitutes, this day, the sole creed of a political party which commands a majority of States, and overwhelming majorities in States at the North.

Now, sir, this is a portentous fact; for a moral sentiment thus diffused among the majority of a great people will work itself out into practical action, and the law—fundamental or statute—which obstructs its progress to development must yield before it or be overborne by it.

Sir, institutions and constitutions and laws and Governments are at last but external structures whose roots are in the moral and intellectual life of the people for whom they exist; and any revolution in that moral and mental life must have its corresponding effect upon institutions subject to its influence.

Now, sir, among a great, earnest, and religious people, whose moral and religious conviction is that slavery is “a sin against God and a crime against humanity,” in the language of the gentleman from Connecticut, [Mr. FERRY,] I ask what countenance or support will be given to a Constitution which sanctions that sin, or to institutions which uphold and establish that crime? Let, sir, the party which represents this sentiment get possession of this Government, intrench itself in all its departments, arm itself with its power; and I ask if the barriers of the Constitution, the forms of law, the obligations of humanity, and the sovereignty of the States will not all melt down in its fiery path? Is it strange, sir, that our people should think of withdrawing their imperiled institutions from the sweep of this fanatical revolution? And yet, sir, if a southern gentleman, from a heart oppressed with gloomy forebodings for his country, expresses any such sentiment upon this floor, forthwith these Republican gentlemen—ay, sir, and grave Senators—seize upon it, tear it from its context, misrepresent the spirit which prompted its utterance, and send it forth grouped with other expressions similarly garbled, to arouse passion, inflame prejudice, and madden fanaticism.

[Sir, the calamity of the times is, that the people of the North do not understand the people of the South; and it is to the interest of a certain class of politicians to perpetuate the misunderstanding.]

The gentleman from Connecticut, sir, in his speech a few days since, repeated the assertion of the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. CORWIN,] that it was the policy of the founders of our Republic to prevent the establishment of slavery in new communities. In my opinion, a greater error was never committed upon this floor. My own State is a standing refutation of the proposition. Sir, slavery exists this day in Mississippi by the encouragement—certainly with the consent—of this Federal Government when it was in the hands of the founders of our Republic. By the act of 1798 the President was authorized to extend over the Mississippi Territory the same Government which existed northwest of the Ohio, excepting the last clause of the famous ordinance prohibiting slavery; and that was repealed. And upon the motion of Mr. Thatcher, of Massachusetts, to protect what he called “the rights of man,” the Wilmot-proviso principle was proposed to be extended over Mississippi, and received at first but twelve votes, and upon the last proposition but one vote. Now, sir, this seems to me to be a legislative declaration to exclude the conclusion that there was any desire upon the part of the founders of our Republic to prevent the establishment of slavery in new communities. It certainly displays the considerate caution which then existed on this subject. It shows that there was no disposition on the part of the founders of our Republic to interfere with the delicate relation in new Territories; and it would have been a policy of peace had this precedent been followed in all subsequent legislation. This act shows that the United States gave their free and spontaneous consent that slaves might be carried and held in Mississippi as property, and that her freemen were, at the proper time, to form an independent government, and become a member of the Union on equal terms with the other parties to the compact. Now, sir, Mississippi stands here to-day, and finds slavery, through the action of this Federal Government, an integral and live element in her social system, interfused with the social relations, the industrial pursuits, the investments of capital, and the political forms of her people.

Gentlemen, I ask, have you the right—I do not mean the constitutional power—have you the moral right, is it just, is it tolerant, to reverse the action of this Government and embark it in a career of hostility to an institution which the action of this Government has made the basis upon whose durability our social and political order is constituted? The condition of Mississippi is that of other new States in the South and Southwest.

The gentleman from Connecticut justifies this policy of his party, on the ground that our institution is regarded by the people of the North as “hateful to God and unjust to man;” that “it cannot exist of natural right.” But when he seeks to give the authority upon which

he bases this dogma, he takes particular pains to lodge it in that most secret place in all nature, "the instincts of the human heart" and the dictates of natural reason.

Mr. FERRY. An enlightened conscience.

Mr. LAMAR. Yes, sir; the dictates of an enlightened conscience. Sir, he almost repented the proposition of the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. BINGHAM,] in a debate during the last Congress, when he said: "I appeal to your immortal spirit, can you be rightfully reduced to slavery?" The gentleman from Connecticut, following that line of argument, asks: "Is there a man upon this floor who would not rather die than be a bondman? who would not rather see his little son dead in his coffin than see that son sold into slavery?"

Well, sir, I answer the gentleman, (and I presume it is just as he wishes me to answer,) that I cannot be rightfully reduced to slavery; nor can you, sir; nor can the gentleman himself. But, sir, does it follow that men are right-angled triangles—that whatever is true of one is predicable of all men? Will these gentlemen say that that is the test by which the rightfulness of a civil regulation is to be determined? If so, I will ask these gentlemen a question: "I appeal to your immortal spirit," can you rightfully be reduced to a felon's cell? I ask the gentleman, "Is there a man upon this floor who would not rather die than be a felon? who "would not rather see his little son dead in his coffin" than to see that son torn from his mother's embrace, and doomed to imprisonment for life with hard labor, the associate of convicts and criminals?"

Mr. FERRY. Does the gentleman wish an answer?

Mr. LAMAR. Not just now. Sir, they can give me but one answer, and that is the answer which I give to their question. And yet there are hundreds of thousands of our fellow-citizens, in whom the same immortal spirit resides, who are reduced to that ignominious condition; and these gentlemen justify the ordinances and statutes which condemn them to it; not because they are not "created with equal inherent, natural, and inalienable rights," but simply because the order and well-being of society require that they shall be deprived of that liberty and equality which, in our hands, is such a priceless, peerless blessing. But I again "appeal to the gentleman's immortal spirit." I ask him can he be made subservient and obedient to another's will—his intellectual and moral nature subject to the restraint and control of another's authority? Sir, these gentlemen are ready to fight for the liberty of private judgment. And yet all the young men of the country, under twenty-one years of age, are reduced to that condition, not because their rights are not natural, inherent, and inalienable, but simply because the interests of society require that they should be kept under this personal restraint until they are fitted for political and social equality.

But, sir, I appeal again "to the gentleman's immortal spirit," and I ask him, can he rightfully be deprived of all political power, even the right of voting; every civil privilege, even of suing, in a Government which acts upon every relation of his being, which taxes his person and taxes his property, and affects, for weal or woe, the destinies of his posterity? The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BINGHAM] has already justified rebellion in Kansas "to maintain the natural right of self-government;" and the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. FERRY] has asserted that one of the objects of our Revolution was to establish "universal equality in political rights." Yet, sir, one half of our adult population—the better half, who have the same immortal nature, and a far purer nature than ours—are reduced to that condition; are deprived of every political right, of every civil privilege. Their existence is ignored by the laws of some States, and their very persons, in many instances, are subject to the custody of coarser and inferior natures. And these gentlemen justify all this, not upon the ground that woman's nature is not immortal, or that her rights are less inherent and inalienable, but simply because the necessities of society demand her consecration to those high and noble responsibilities which unfit her for the exercise of political rights.

Now, I put the question, and I want it answered, whether female dependence or the immaturity of youth constitute any better reason for the privation of political and social equality, for the infliction of civil disabilities and personal restraints, than the ignorance, superstition, the mental and moral debasement which centuries of barbarism have entailed upon a servile race? I want to know, sir, if the good of society, its interests and order, as a whole, require that this race should be retained in its existing relation; whether the institution does not stand vindicated by every principle upon which human institutions repose?

Mr. Chairman, the mistake of these gentlemen is this: that men are to be governed by certain fixed, inflexible, invariable rules, deduced from natural reason; and that a government which is applicable to a race of intelligent white men can be forced upon States consisting of two distinct races, opposite in color, and differing as widely in character, disposition, moral and mental habits, as are the opposing characteristics of barbarism and civilization.

But, sir, shall we always be disputing about these "natural rights of man" and the foundations of society? Are we to have no time-honored institutions, no recognized precedents, no grand maxims of common law, growing up around our Constitution, and almost as sacred as the Constitution itself? Is our grand Republic, its destiny, its administration—

tion, its policy, to be forever floating hither and thither upon the uncertain billows of this beautiful but dangerous sea of political metaphysics? Are these gentlemen prepared to say that every institution of society must stand or fall, according as it conforms, or fails to conform, to some principle of natural right, deduced by each generation from natural reason? Where, sir, would such a principle stop? There are philosophers, and I believe they are correct, who say that the right of individual property cannot be deduced from the natural reason of man.

But, sir, this principle is not limited in its action to political forms; it institutes revolt in all the elements of the social system, and raises impious war against the recognized ordinances and express commandments of God. The gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. FERRY] stated, the other day, that there was no warrant in the language of inspiration for the relation of master and slave as it exists in the South. Now, sir, I am not going to quote the Bible upon these gentlemen; but I propose to give them the language of a learned northern divine, the president of a northern college, an advocate of immediate abolition, whose book on moral science is the text-book of your northern colleges, academies, and schools. Dr. Wayland, in his letters on the subject of slavery, speaking of the 25th chapter of Leviticus, in which the Hebrews are commanded to buy the children of the strangers among them, uses the following language:

"The authority to take them as *slaves* seems to be a part of this original, peculiar, and anomalous grant."

I presume, Mr. Chairman, none but an Abolitionist would characterize a grant of God as *anomalous*. [Laughter.]

Again:

"I grant at once that the Hebrews held *slaves* from the time of the conquest of Canaan, and that Abraham and the patriarchs held them many centuries before. I grant, also, Moses enacted laws with special reference to that relation."

I hope I have the attention of the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. FERRY] to the next sentence:

"I wonder," says Dr. Wayland, "*that any should have the hardihood to deny so plain a matter of record. I should as soon deny the delivery of the ten commandments to Moses.*"

Mr. FERRY. Will the gentleman yield to me a moment?

Mr. LAMAR. It is this stupid hour rule that prevents my yielding to the gentleman.

Mr. FERRY. I do not wish to interrupt the gentleman further than to say that I will take another opportunity to answer him.

Mr. LAMAR. Sir, the gentleman said that the sentiment of all Christendom was repugnant to the institution of slavery. Christianity came into the world when the relation of master and slave was one of cruelty and hostility. "Our slaves are our enemies," was the observation of the elder Cato. How did our Saviour and his apostles treat that relation? I propose, sir, no views of my own; but I will give an extract from Dr. Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science*, the text-book of your northern schools. In an argument, seeking to prove "the moral principles of the Gospel to be directly subversive of the principles of slavery," he makes the following admission:

"The Gospel neither commands masters to manumit their slaves nor authorizes slaves to free themselves from their masters; and, also, it goes further, and prescribes the duties suited to both parties in their present condition."

Again:

"The *duty of slaves* is also explicitly made known in the Bible. They are bound to obedience, fidelity, submission, and respect to their masters, not only to the good and kind, but also to the unkind and froward; not, however, on the ground of *duty to man*, but on the ground of *duty to God*."—*Wayland's Elements of Moral Science*, pages 225 and 229, edition in the Congressional Library.

This is abolition authority, I want it understood.

Now, sir, the teachings of the Apostles, as they are here made known by Dr. Wayland, were the teachings of the Christian Church. The Church was itself a slaveholder, and Christian kings and princes followed its example. There is in Hampton Court at this day, the marble bust of the favorite negro slave of William III., Prince of Orange—one of the cherubim of English liberty—with a carved collar around his neck, with a padlock upon it, and in every respect made like a dog's collar.

But, sir, there is one authority which I came near forgetting to read, and which I suppose stands higher with those gentlemen than even Dr. Wayland. It is a work which is an elaborate exposition of certain abstract principles of New England theology and politics, albeit in a narrative and dramatic form. I read from the "Minister's Wooing," by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. [Laughter.] In this novel, which would stand unequalled as a work of fiction but for the anti-slavery bigotry which runs like a coarse black thread through the otherwise admirable tissue of thought and feeling, she puts in the mouth of the erudite and learned Dr. Hopkins—the hero, by the way, of the tale—the following answer to Mr. Marvin's question:

"Was there not an express permission given to Israel to buy and hold slaves as of old?"

Says the Doctor:

"Doubtless; but many permissions were given to them which were local and temporary; for if we hold them to apply to the human race, the Turks might quote the Bible for making slaves of us, if they could; and the Al-

gerines have the Scripture all on their side; and our own blacks at some future time, if they can get the power, might justify themselves in making slaves of us." [page 174.]

Now, sir, I do not wish the point of my argument misunderstood. I am not seeking to show a Bible sanction of southern slavery as it now exists. I do not ask your assent to that. My point is, that the *principle* with which you are warring upon us, is condemned by the ordinance of God and the language of Scripture. I say that God would never, even "for local and temporary purposes," have given permission for that which comes in conflict with those immutable principles of natural right of which he is the author. When he established slavery among the Jews, he established the principle that there may be conditions and circumstances under which slavery is not "hateful to God or unjust to man." Nor does this argument justify Turkish slavery, Algerine slavery, or white slavery; it justifies no sort of slavery except that which justifies itself by the rightfulness of its own conditions and circumstances. And this is the ground upon which we of the South place our cherished institutions. We maintain that these justifying circumstances do exist in relation to our institution of negro slavery. They consist in the unfitness of the black race for a condition higher than that of slavery. Our proposition is, that when these two races are brought into contact, the supremacy of the white man must be acknowledged, and his right to govern both races with reference to the happiness of both. This is the principle upon which, until recently, the legislation of all your northern States was founded. They all asserted the supremacy of the white man and the subordination of the black man.

The gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. FERRY] stated that the object of our Revolution was to establish "universal equality in political rights, and the indefensible title of *all men* to social and civil liberty." He ought to have had the candor to have held up his own State to public reprobation for violating this principle; for in Connecticut he knows the negro has neither political nor social equality; that he is deprived of the right of voting; that he is legally incompetent as a witness against white men, and excluded from the right of intermarriage with whites. Those gentlemen guard sedulously enough against all contact of this race with themselves, or their own class of society. I could not insult that gentleman more grossly than to ask him if he is willing to throw open the sacred precincts of his family, and allow the negro to come in as an equal member. No, sir; but he is for *freeing his labor*, and possibly for giving him the right of voting, and by that means bringing him in contact and equality, *not with himself*, but with the *laboring white freemen of the North*; and why such a proposition does not kindle a consuming flame of indignation among those laboring freemen of the North, is one of those political phenomena for which I will not undertake to account.

Sir, the only cause of the difference between the legislation of northern and southern States upon the subject of slavery, is, that the negroes are not sufficient in numbers at the North to make it necessary to reduce them to the condition of domestic servitude, while with us that condition is indispensable to the good order and welfare of the whole society. And it is demonstrable—and I will make it so appear, if I have time—that the negro in the southern States has reached a moral and intellectual development superior to his race in any other position in which he has been placed. That he contributes more, in his present condition, to the good of mankind, their moral and intellectual progress, than in any other position in which he has been placed. What was his condition when he was first brought here? Look at him upon his native continent. The most humane explorers of the African continent tell us that they exist there without social or political order, without modesty or shame, some of the tribes not even reaching the civilization of the fig-leaf.

I propose, just here, to read from Hegel's Philosophy of History, an imperishable monument of human genius, in which the author holds "freedom to be the essence of humanity, and slavery the condition of injustice." And what does he say?

"The negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality, all that we call feeling, if we would rightly comprehend him. There is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character." [Page 97.]

"The undervaluing of humanity among them reaches an incredible degree of intensity. Tyranny is regarded as no wrong, and cannibalism is looked upon as quite customary and proper." * * * "The devouring of human flesh is altogether consonant with the general principles of the African race. To the sensual negro, human flesh is but an object of sense—mere flesh." [Pages 99-100.]

After describing many other characteristics, the author concludes "*slavery* to have been the occasion of the *increase of human feeling* among the negroes. The doctrine which we deduce from this condition of slavery among the negroes, and which constitutes the only side of the question that has an interest for our inquiry, is that which we deduce from the idea, viz: that the 'natural condition' itself is one of absolute and thorough injustice, contravention of the right and just. Every intermediate grade between this and the realization of a rational state retains, as might be expected, elements and aspects of injustice. Therefore, we find slavery even in the Greek and Roman States, as we do serfdom, down to the latest times. But thus existing in a State, *slavery is itself a phase of advance from the merely isolated sensual existence, a phase of education, a mode of becoming participant in a higher morality and the culture connected with it.*" [Page 104.]

Now, sir, will you say that the three hundred thousand negroes, whose character is thus described by this German author, brought over to this continent, would ever have had

their condition improved, or would ever have secured to themselves the benefits they now enjoy, had they been left in their "natural condition?" At that time there were two barbarous races, which came in contact upon this continent with the European. The one was the African, occupying the lowest point in the scale of human existence; the other was the noble Indian race, superior to the African in intelligence, in moral and physical development. Free as the wild bird of his native forests; bold as the stream which dashed down his mountain gorges; generous as the bonneted nature around him, the American Indian goes into history the poetic embodiment of savage life. What has been his fate compared with that of the African?

What has become of the Narragansetts, Pequots, Senecas, Oneidas, and Delawares? Driven back by the advancing wave of European civilization to continually contracting circles, with diminished means of subsistence, into degradation, wretchedness, and extinction.

The African, with all its foulness, with all its prosaic vulgarities, domesticated and disciplined, has been by that same wave borne up higher and higher, until now it furnishes inspiration for northern song, heroes and heroines for northern romances, and is invited by northern statesmen into their charmed circle of political and social equality. Not just yet, gentlemen, if you please. He is not your equal; and history proves that even when he has reached this point of civilization, if you take from under him the institution which has borne him up to it, he relapses into his pristine barbarism. I intended to show this by detailed references to the French islands, the English Antilles, and other countries in which slavery has been abolished. I could have shown that in Hayti, where the negro was left with all the endowments of a civilization which vied with that of Rome in gorgeous magnificence, you see now nothing but poverty, vice, indolence, and all the other signs of a rapidly approaching barbarism. I intended to show from anti-slavery authority that the British Antilles have disappointed every promise and frustrated every hope that accompanied the act of emancipation. I intended to show the condition of the free colored population in Peru, as exhibited by a most intelligent German traveler, Von Tschudi, whose work was published among the "Choice Reading" of the anti-slavery publishing house of Wiley & Putnam, in New York.

I need not refer to Liberia. The gentleman formerly from Missouri, [Mr. Blair,] has demonstrated on this floor that Liberia is a failure, and Africa still the "house of bondage." The distinguished gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Corwin] has expressed some doubt about that matter, but he can certainly point to no sign of an advance beyond the original moral status of the colony; and, sir, if it does not show signs of decay and dissolution, it is because the emigration of our freed negroes pours constantly into the shrunken veins of its sickly civilization fresh tides of moral and mental life. I need not refer to the condition of the free negro in the northern States. These gentlemen are familiar with it. One thing I will say, that the census returns show that his moral and physical condition is superior in the South to what it is in the North. And if freedom to the individual be such a boon and blessing to the African, southern slavery has done more in this respect for the race than northern abolitionism. There have been one hundred thousand more emancipated by the southern States than have been emancipated by the northern States; and there are forty thousand free negroes living in the South now more than are resident in the northern States.

If, then, we show that the condition of the negro at the South is superior to his condition in any other country, and that the abolition of slavery has always been followed by immediate retrogression, I ask of what has humanity to complain against the institution?

Sir, another argument that has been advanced by northern gentlemen, and by the leader of their party is, that the interests of the white race require the exclusion of this institution from new territory; that it should be dedicated to free soil, and to the freemen of the North. Now, I want to say, in passing, that that puts out of view every consideration of humanity which these gentlemen have made the instrument of the fanaticism that has hitherto been waged against us. But I will pass on. How do the interests of the white race require the restriction of slavery? They say that free labor is dishonored by its contact with slave labor. How? The two systems co-exist under our Republic. Look at labor as it exists at the North—the mighty North—the seat of commerce, manufactures, mechanic arts, accumulated wealth, and common schools. Look at the mighty population that fills that vast territory with the hum of its free industry. The toiling millions that constitute the sub-stratum on which this splendid fabric of free society rears its aspiring head! Are they not all freemen? Is not each one of them the equal of the proudest and richest in the land; tenacious of his rights and proud of his position? What, though he is often compelled to toil in mid-day while the very earth is melting with fervent heat, and while the negro slave is resting from his work, still his labor is dignified and honorable, because it is free; and although commerce may languish, and manufactures go into decay, and the wages of labor fall, and the price of provisions increase, yet he can hush the mutterings of discontent and still the gnawings of hunger by the one proud, glorious thought—the *dignity of labor*. Now, how is this labor contaminated by the existence of southern slave labor? Sir, our negroes are working *under*, and for your free laborers at the North. They furnish them with the raw material on which this free labor exercises its skill and industry; the raw material which is the very basis of your commerce and manufacturing enterprise.

But you say it becomes dishonored by coming in contact with slave labor in the common territory. This very contact exists in the South; and is labor dishonored there? Why, according to the estimate of these gentlemen, there are only three hundred and twenty thousand slaveholders in the South; all the balance are non-slaveholding laborers. Mark that! Now, gentlemen, universal suffrage exists in the South. Each one of these three hundred and twenty thousand slaveholders has one vote, and no more. Each one of the five million non-slaveholders has one vote, and no less. These latter, then, have the overwhelming majority. Sir, the institution is in the hollow of the hand of the non-slaveholder of the South. He has but to close his hand, and the institution is crushed. He sees its effects on the slave; he feels its effects on himself. Sir, if these effects were degrading, why not throw it off, when he could do it by simply depositing a ballot in a senseless urn? I will tell you why he does not do it. I will show you why it is that, from that vast body of independent, voting freemen, there comes up not one whisper of disapprobation, not one murmur of discontent, not one protest against its morality, its justice, and its expediency. It is because there is no class among whom negro slavery secures such wide-spread blessings as the non-slaveholders of the South. There has never been a race of men more maligned and lied about than that very class of freemen in the South. I know them. I have lived among them, and have felt the heart-warm grasp of their strong hands; and I tell you, Mr. Chairman, that God's sun does not shine on a nobler, prouder, happier, more prosperous, and elevated class of people, than the non-slaveholders of the South. It is impossible, from the very nature and constitution of southern society, that it should be otherwise.

I have time to mention only one fact, among others, that shows you its advantages in their view. Mr. Webster, in one of his speeches, spoke of the ownership of land as constituting the basis of free government, and said that suffrage should be restricted to those whose property gave them an interest in the preservation of the State. Now, I do not think that. I think that an honest, intelligent laboring man is as much entitled to a participation in the government as the member of any other class of society.

But there are certain moral advantages in favor of a land-owning community. Sir, in every country, and in every age, the proprietorship of the soil has been regarded as a position of dignity and of personal elevation. Now, sir, that is the position of the non-slaveholding laborers of the South. They are a nation of land-owners. There is not such a body of land-owners in the world as the non-slaveholders of the South. Each of them feels in himself a pride of character, an elevation of position; and, sir, he feels that he is not merely a freeman, he is a freeholder; more than that, he is a *gentleman*. You talk about free labor at the North and free soil, as if it did not exist in greater purity in the South than anywhere else. What you call "operatives" have to share the profits of their labor with capital, and it is hinted that capital gets the lion's share. What we call "slaves" are owned by capital, and get their return only in food, raiment, shelter, and protecting care. But, sir, true free labor is that which the southern farmer, with his own free arm, applies to his own soil, allowing neither master, capitalist, nor employer, to have any participation in its profits. And, sir, what are those profits? Not alone the crop of cotton, corn, and potatoes; something more than that. When the strong, brave man drives his plowshare through the fallow ground, the up-turned sod reveals to his eye that which is richer to him than the golden sands of California:

" 'Tis the sparkle of liberty "

and personal independence. Sir, at the end of the year, he has other gains, too, that his labor brings him; the industry and honesty of the father, the household virtues of the mother, the intelligence of the sons, the chastity of the daughters—there, sir, is a harvest which we would not barter for this wide world's commerce, and all its honors besides.

But, sir, let us see what this institution has done for the progress of mankind; and this brings me to the third class of men in the South who have been subject to misrepresentation. I allude to the southern planters. I have but a moment to spare, and I will allude to one branch of southern industry as an illustration of the whole—I mean cotton culture. Some idea of the importance of the cotton trade to the civilized world may be obtained by the following graphic description of its influence upon Great Britain, from the pen of Macaulay:

"I see in this country a great manufacturing population drawing the materials of manufacture from a limited market. I see a great cotton trade carried on, which furnishes nearly two million people with food, clothes, and firing; and I say that, if you shut out slave-grown cotton, you would produce a mass of misery among the people whom Providence has committed to your charge, frightful to contemplate; you would introduce desolation into your richly flourishing manufacturing districts; you would reduce hundreds on hundreds to beggary and destitution; you would risk the stability of your institutions; and when you had done all this, you would have great reason to doubt whether you had conferred any great benefits on the particular class for whom you made such a sacrifice."

Now, sir, the cotton plant grows in the East Indies. It has been long a product of Bengal and Malabar. It grows in the West Indies. During the French domination, Hayti exported a larger quantity of cotton than the North American continent. It exists in Persia; it exists in Brazil; it exists in Egypt, and China; in Spain, in Malta, and in Mexico; it exists in Africa itself. The peculiarity of climate and soil necessary to its production has been greatly exaggerated, in my opinion. I attribute the vast production, swelled from one hun-

dred and fifty thousand pounds to four million bales in seventy years, to the combination of moral and physical qualities which have been associated in its culture.

The southern planter is not the indolent, aristocratic nabob which he has been represented to be. He is, in general, careful, patient, provident, industrious, forbearing, and yet firm and determined. It is these qualities which have enabled him to take a race of untamed savages, with no habits except such as inspire disgust, with no arts, no information, and out of such a people to make the finest body of fixed laborers that the world has ever seen. Sir, England has imported Coolies, Chinese, natives from the African coast, into her colonies, and yet she has been unable to compete with the southern plantations. There is no product which requires such a constant and unremitting attention, such continuous labor, as the cotton plant. The great complaint in the British colonies is, that the fruit of each year's efforts is lost by the broken and irregular labor of the operatives. Now, sir, the southern planter has secured continuity, consistency, and steadfastness, in the most indolent, inconsistent, and capricious of the human race. Burke, in his speech upon conciliation with America, paid to the victorious industry employed in the fisheries of the colonies of New England a just and glowing tribute of admiration. The perseverance, the dexterous and firm sagacity enlisted in that perilous mode of industry, is worthy of his esteem. Something of the same qualities are displayed by the southern planter in the production of those beneficent results which have flowed from the culture of the great tropical products of the southern States.

The southern planter penetrates the dense forests, the tangled brake, the gloomy wilderness of our river swamps, where pestilence has its abode, and there, day by day and year by year, amidst exposure, privation, and sickness, are his foresight, his prudence, his self-reliance, his adaptation of means to ends, called into requisition. In the communion with himself—which his isolation makes indispensable—and in the daily and yearly provision for a large body of domestics and dependents for whom he has to think, and whose labor he has to direct, he forms those qualities which enable him to emerge from his isolation to fill the county court, or to become a member of his State Legislature, to discharge the duties of local magistracy, or to take his place in the national councils.

The solution of the enigma of the "slave power," so mysterious to transcendental and infant-school philosophers, may be sought here. Its basis lies in that cool, vigorous judgment and unerring sense applicable to the ordinary affairs and intercourse of men which the southern mode of life fosters. The habits of industry, firmness of purpose, fidelity to dependents, self-reliance, and the sentiment of justice in all the various relations of life which are necessary to the management of a well-ordered plantation, fit men to guide legislatures and command armies.

I see gentlemen are disposed to smile at this suggestion. In confirmation of what I say, I have only to point them to the fact that it was in such communities as these that a Washington, a Jackson, a Taylor, a Scott, a Twiggs, a Quitman, a Davis, a Lee, a Ringgold, a Bragg, a Butler, and a host of others, acquired those qualities which enabled them, in the positions in which their country placed them, to add such undying luster to the American name. It was in such communities that such men as Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Polk, Lowndes, Calhoun, Clay, Macon, Marshall, Taney, and a host of others that I could mention, acquired those characteristics which their countrymen North and South instinctively discerned whenever "called upon to see some awful moment to which Heaven has joined great issues, good or bad, for human kind."

I have sought, sir, in a cursory way, under the whip and spur of this hour rule, to show that there is nothing in our institutions which cannot stand justified before impartial history for our mode of dealing with the race which Providence has placed in our hands. I do not pretend to say that, in the adjustment of our economic forces, there may not be ameliorations. I do not pretend to say that we have arrived at a standard of ideal perfection. But I do say that there is a reach of thought and a maturity of judgment brought to bear upon this subject in the South which is always adequate to evolve the greatest good. We certainly can learn nothing from the enemies of our institutions and conspirators against our peace.

I come to the last consideration I think it proper to urge upon the attention of the House. Is it the part of statesmen to attempt to exercise the powers of this Government in a spirit unfriendly to the institutions and interests involved in the political and economical system which I have been discussing? The father of the Constitution, Mr. Madison, on the floor of the convention which framed it, expressed a different sentiment:

"He admitted that every peculiar interest, whether in any class of citizens or any description of States, ought to be secured as far as possible. WHEREVER THERE IS DANGER OF ATTACK, THERE OUGHT TO BE GIVEN A CONSTITUTIONAL POWER OF DEFENSE. But he contended the States were divided into different interests, not by their difference in size, but by other circumstances, the most material of which resulted partly from climate, but principally from the effects of their having, or not having, slaves. These two causes concurred in forming the great division of interests in the United States. It did not lay between the large and small States. It lay between the northern and southern States; and, if any defensive power were necessary, it ought to be mutually to these two interests. He was so strongly impressed with this important truth, he had been casting about in his mind for some scheme that would answer the purpose."

I do not anticipate that the magnanimous counsels of a wise and patriotic statesman, whose provisions embraced in their scope the entire Republic, will obtain such authority as to secure additional guarantees to our institutions. These we have not asked. We ask only our constitutional rights in the Union. The southern people demand that this organized "irrepressible conflict" shall stop—that the institution of slavery shall be maintained as an existing fact in this Confederacy. The sentiment is rapidly approaching to unanimity among them, that any attempt to impair its property-value, or a single political privilege which it confers, or any of the constitutional rights by which it is guaranteed, or to place over them the party which arrogates to itself the right to do any of these things, will be a fatal blow at the peace and stability of this great country.